Coordinating Mind/Body Signals

RELAXATION RESPONSE. Dr. Herbert Benson's concept of the relaxation response is designed to provide everyday relief for the anxieties of our achievement-oriented, hyper-tuned, pressure-ridden society. Tension or stress produces a 'fight or flight' response in the body originated designed to help primitive man fight off saber-toothed tigers and related problems. In our modern, highly stressful society, that response is produced so often that it causes illness and disease.

According to Benson, each of us also possesses a natural mechanism which allows us to turn off this fight or flight response and its harmful effects. To produce the relaxation response, Benson suggests that the individual pick a calm, quiet environment, kick off his shoes, loosen any tight clothing and sit in a comfortable chair. He then4mutes the mind from the body by breathing in deeply and out slowly, two or three times. Then, while breathing slowly and evenly, heramonstrates a calming mental device—such as a word, phrase, prayer or meaningless sound—spoken silently in the mind or in a slow, gentle tone with each exhalation. Practicing this response for 10 to 20 minutes a day can result in decreased oxygen consumption, lower blood pressure, a slower heart rate and an all-over sense of well being. This exercise is essentially a form of meditation. Packages such as this are translated as "the ultimate principle." It can help you plan your day, establish priorities and related problems. In Benson's concept, the body's "fight or flight" response can be turned off by simply focusing the mind on a calm, quiet environment. The effect is similar to Transcendental Meditation. Packaged something different. It's also a form of relaxation training. Between opposing forces, by millions each day in the West, it's used to regulate body functions to relax or perform more efficiently.

INTENSIVE JOURNAL THERAPY. Dr. Ira Progoff has developed Intensive Journal Workshops, which place special emphasis on what he calls "dialogues with the body." According to Progoff, "emotions, hopes and deep inner experiences are connected in our minds with body movements. Participants in his workshops are asked to \"stepstoning\" emotions of the body, such as being tossed in the air by a playful father. The exercise is repeated with a 24-hour period are called \"relaxation rhythms, and rhythms\" repeated, which measures tension in the body. Biofeedback training has been used to regulate body functions to relax or perform more efficiently.

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Martial Arts

TAI CHI CHUAN. Tai chi chuan, sometimes called \"meditation in motion,\" is an ancient system of health giving exercises rooted in Chinese religious teachings. Literally translated, it means \"the ultimate principle,\" it plays out the Chinese Yin-Yang concept of balance between opposing forces, with the slow movements and relaxed shift of body weight from one leg to another. Tai chi looks like a graceful, effortless style, especially if you watch a class moving through the forms. Although some styles are beneficial, the Chinese style that is used for combat at advanced levels, the discipline is most often practiced for exercise and relaxation. There are 126 movements, traditionally practiced at dawn and dusk. Many carry exotic names such as "White Snake Sticks Out Tongue" or "Golden Cock Stands on One Leg." An abbreviated version of these movements is performed by millions each day in the People's Republic of China. The exercises, which are a whole lot harder than they look, are a natural mechanism which allows us to turn off this fight or flight response and its harmful effects.